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DIRECTORATE OF
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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Tanzania: Anatomy of a Union

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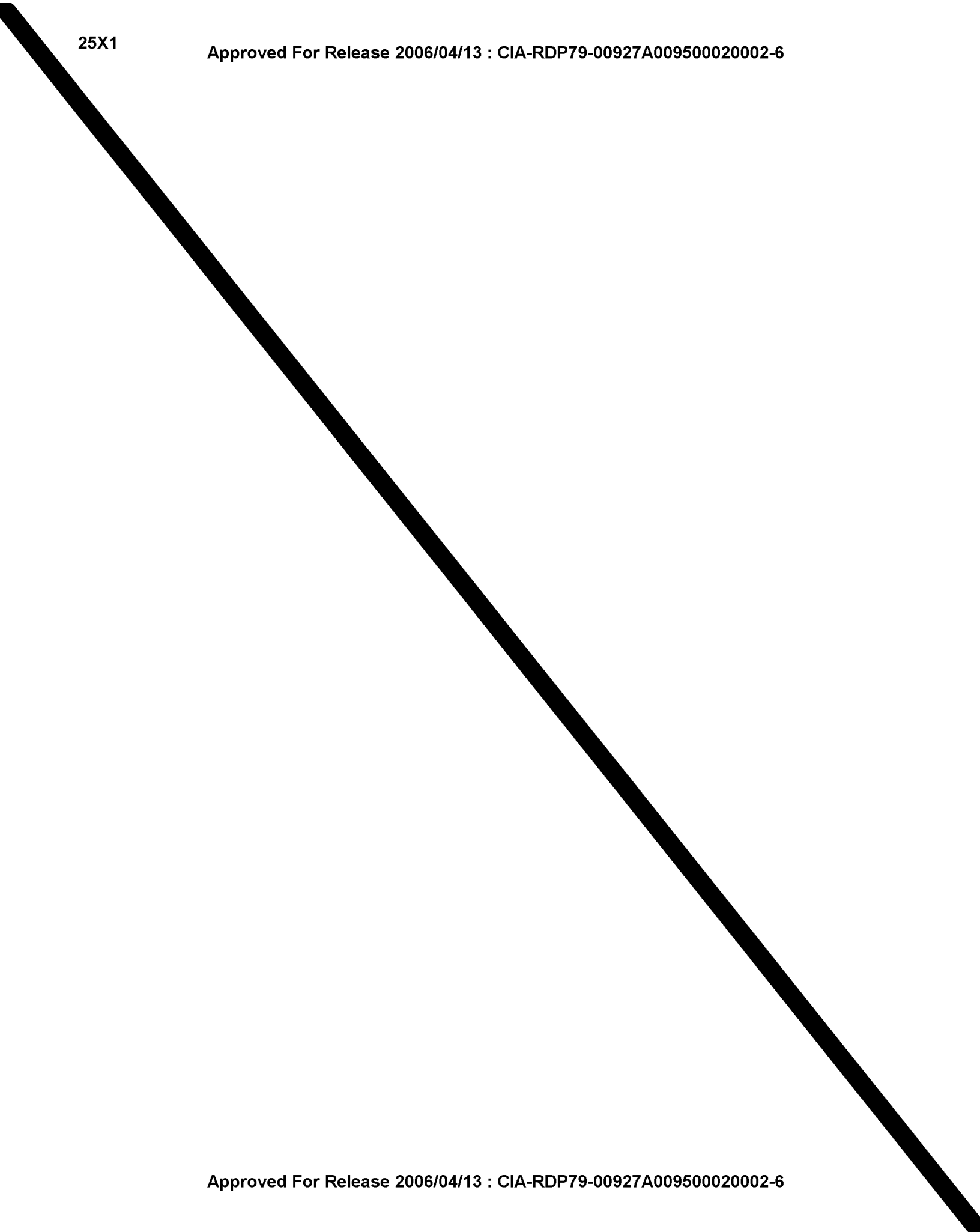

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TANZANIA:

Anatomy of a Union

When Tanganyika and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba merged in April 1964, President Julius Nyerere hailed the step as a victory for African unity. On the other hand, critics, noting the rapid growth of Chinese and East German influence on Zanzibar, scored the union as opening the way for Communist penetration of east Africa. Since then Tanzania has become neither a shining example of African solidarity nor a bridgehead for Communist subversion. The Chinese have established a large presence on the mainland as well as on the islands, but the merger did relatively little to smooth the way for them, and their influence in Dar es Salaam is still much less than on Zanzibar. Even on the island, the Chinese, although exercising some influence, are not in a position to dictate policy.

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As for the union, relations between the mainland government and the nominally subordinate Revolutionary Council, which governs the islands, have often resembled a game of tug of war. Dar es Salaam has taken over some common administrative services in accordance with the interim constitution of 1965 and now acts as the official spokesman in foreign affairs. Otherwise, the Revolutionary Council has stubbornly resisted almost every effort to circumscribe its authority and integrate the islands into the mainland political system. That the union has survived these strains is attributable mainly to Nyerere's patience and political skill. Yet his inability and at times unwillingness to exercise a restraining hand over the erratic and oppressive Revolutionary Council has done little to endear Zanzibar to mainland Tanzanians and has left Nyerere open to sharp and embarrassing criticism from abroad. Indeed, although the association has shown remarkable durability, the almost perennial difficulties that have marked its history clearly demonstrate that Tanzania remains a loose federation of two virtually autonomous states.

Origins of Union

On 12 January 1964, the sultan of Zanzibar and Pemba and his Arab-dominated government were swept aside in a short, bloody revolt. In its turbulent wake, the union of Tanganyika and the islands was born.

Although the timing of the Zanzibar revolution caught many by surprise, its causes were clearly evident. For well over a century the island's African majority had been dominated by a small Arab ruling class. After the British established a protectorate over the Sultanate in 1890, they did little to improve the African's lot but a good deal to help perpetuate Arab supremacy. With the introduction of representative government and party politics in the 1950s, largely dormant feelings of African discontent and resentment of Arab rule quickly began to surface. Nevertheless, because of divisions among the Africans themselves and gerrymandering before the pre-independence elections, the Afro-Sharazi Party, the rallying point for African nationalism, was never quite able to translate its widespread popular strength into a parliamentary majority. As a result, by the time Britain finally granted the islands independence in December 1963, racial animosities were quite strong.

All of the Africans' pent-up frustrations and bitterness were unleashed in the revolution, which occurred only a month later. In the first few

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weeks, several hundred Arabs were killed or placed in detention; many more fled the island. The sultan's government was replaced by a Revolutionary Council whose 32 members were mostly either Communist-trained or uneducated thugs. Abeid Karume, the popular demagogic leader of the Afro-Sharazi Party who had close ties with the mainland, became president of Zanzibar and chairman of the council. Pro-Communist radicals took over other key posts, and with their help the Chinese, East Germans and, to a lesser extent, the Soviets quickly began to establish themselves on the islands.

Although the mainland sympathized with the aims of the revolution, Nyerere, whose security had been badly shaken by an army mutiny in late January 1964 became alarmed by the growth of Communist influence on Zanzibar. Fearing that the radicals would use the island as a center for subversion against the mainland, Nyerere undertook to persuade Karume to merge the islands with Tanganyika. In a union, he believed, he could isolate the leaders of the pro-Communist factions and nullify their influence by absorbing them into the mainland government. To preserve his own position and strengthen his hand over the more unruly council members, Karume rammed ratification of the merger through a resisting Revolutionary Council; on 26 April 1964, three and a half months after the revolution, the articles of union were signed.

A State Within a State

At the outset, Nyerere at least hoped that the union would draw the islands closer into the mainland orbit. In this he seriously misjudged the determination of Karume to remain free of control from Dar es Salaam.

Because the merger was hastily arranged, a constitution was not drawn up until over a year later. This interim constitution was intended to serve only until Zanzibar was ready to be fully integrated into the mainland's one-party political system. The interim constitution has never been fully implemented, let alone followed by a permanent document.

Under the interim constitution, the Revolutionary Council was granted almost complete executive and legislative authority over the islands. As president of Zanzibar, Karume also became vice president of Tanzania. To assuage the Zanzibaris' fears of being swallowed up by their larger partner, they were also allotted a disproportionately large block of seats in the National Assembly. It was agreed that the mainland would gradually assume over-all responsibility for external affairs, defense, police, citizenship, immigration, external trade, foreign exchange, and exchange controls; also to be taken over were income tax and customs collection, harbors and

The 1964 Revolution: *Settling old scores.*

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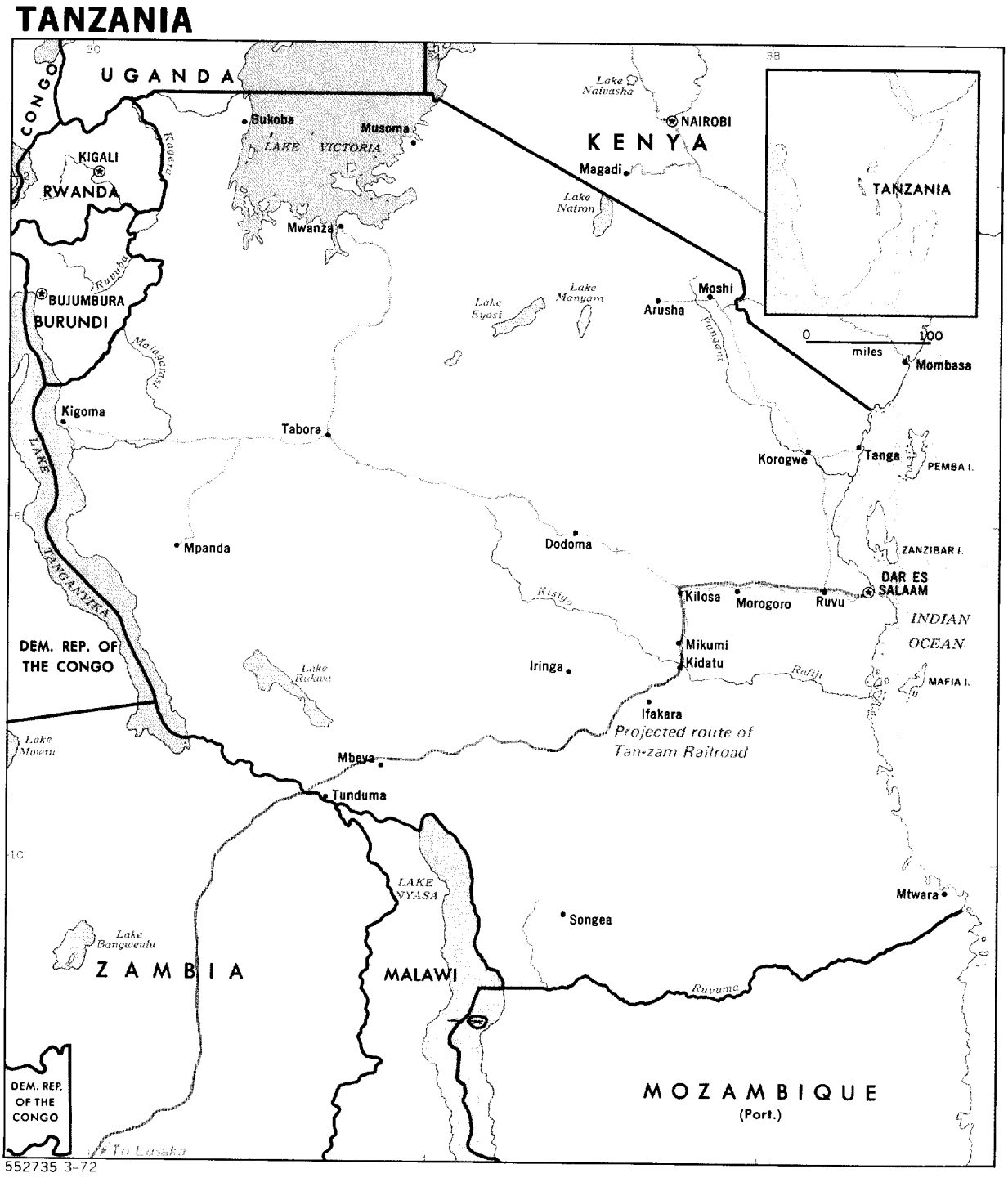

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civil aviation, post and telegraph, civil service administration, and currency and banking.

Since then, the Revolutionary Council has stymied Nyerere's efforts to consolidate the two governments. Although Zanzibar allows the mainland to speak for it in foreign affairs, the council continues to deal directly with foreign countries on aid and trade. The islands' security forces have also been formally subordinated to the mainland, but amalgamation in this case is even less real than in foreign affairs. The union government pays their salaries, but most of the officers and men are Zanzibaris, and the top posts in the army and police are held by members of the Revolutionary Council. Should any confrontation with the mainland arise, their first loyalty would be to the council.

Nyerere's most solid achievement has been the integration of Zanzibar into the East African Community. During 1967 and 1968, income and customs collection, civil aviation (but not harbor), and post and telegraph services all passed into the community's hands. These concessions were extracted from a reluctant Revolutionary Council only after months of negotiation, and for a price—a generous $2 million yearly subsidy over which the Zanzibaris continue to bicker.

In almost every other respect, the Revolutionary Council operates as if there were no interim constitution. The administration of the islands' civil service, local economic affairs, foreign trade, and banking, for example, remain firmly in the hands of the Revolutionary Council, which continues to exercise authority over such other union matters as immigration and citizenship. The council in fact has shown little compunction about disregarding the constitution and union authorities. Without consulting the mainland, Karume has stripped some of Zanzibar's minority groups of their citizenship, restricted travel outside the islands (even to the mainland), temporarily banned East African Community air flights, and completely ignored East African customs to evade paying duties on such items as luxury cars for members of his council. The council also handed the union a serious setback three years ago when it replaced mainland-appointed judges on Zanzibar with home-grown people's courts.

The council's disregard for law is even more notorious in matters concerning only the Zanzibaris; and in these affairs it is even more of an embarrassment to Nyerere. In sharp contrast with the President's own commitment to humanistic and democratic ideals, the Revolutionary Council is deeply distrustful of the democratic process and has no regard for individual liberty. Karume has declared elections unnecessary because the islands are "already governed by the people." In truth, Zanzibar is a police state, governed by decree and controlled by force.

THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL HAS SHOWN LITTLE COMPUNCTION ABOUT DISREGARDING THE CONSTITUTION AND UNION AUTHORITIES.

In the beginning, the Revolutionary Council, as an African government bent on righting certain social and economic injustices, could claim some popularity. Soon after the revolution, it instituted land reform, opened up the educational system to the Africans and began to expand health facilities. After eight years of corrupt, inefficient, and tyrannical rule, however, the Revolutionary Council has managed to erode whatever popular support it once had. Political opponents, both real and imagined, have been imprisoned without trial and some have been executed. The populace has been subjected to forced labor, and, because of Karume's obsession with increasing the islands' foreign exchange reserves, the government has progressively reduced the flow of imports, causing periodic food shortages. These shortages have become particularly acute during the last six months.

More than any other group, however, the islands' Asians (Indians, Persians, and Pakistanis)

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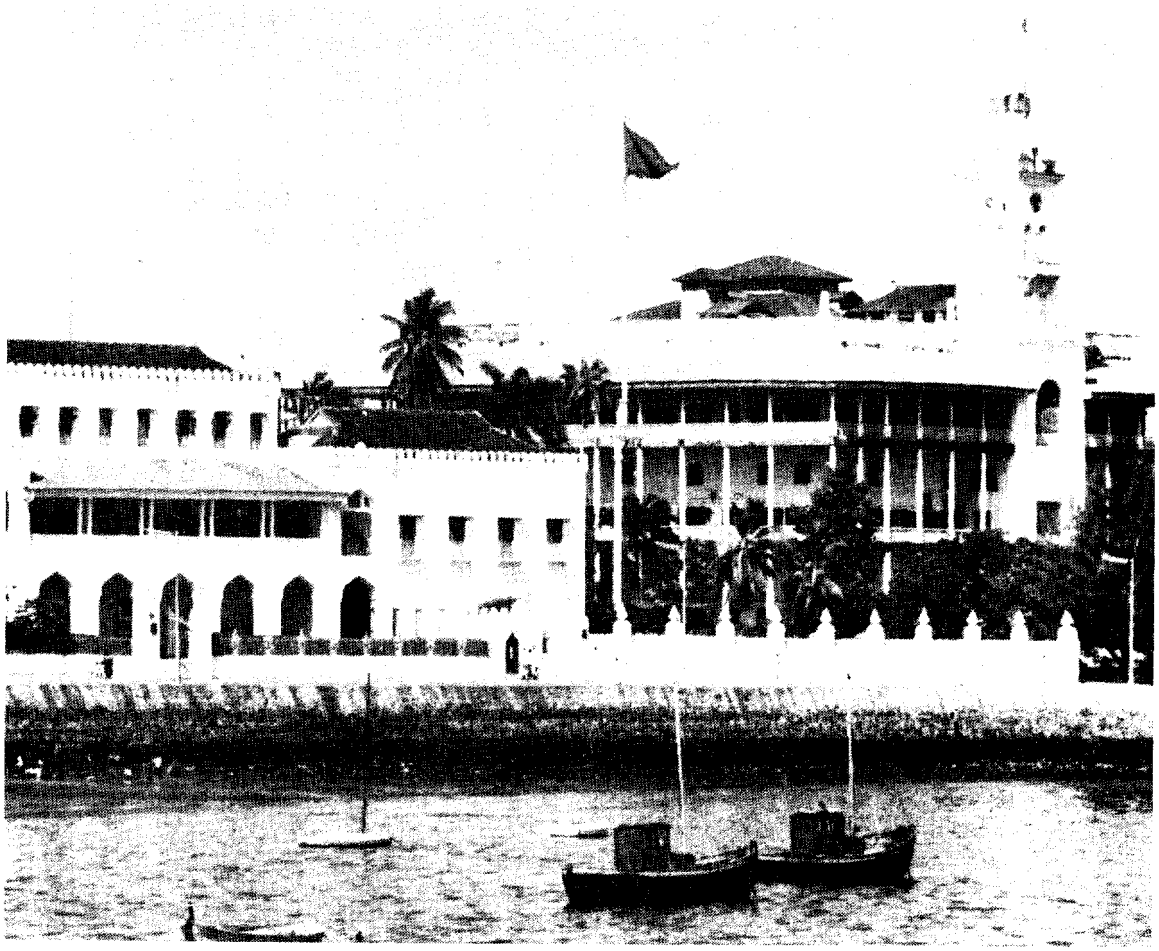
who sided with the old regime, have suffered from the Revolutionary Council's misrule and brutality. Karume has carried on an almost personal vendetta against the small and dwindling Asian communities. In the name of socialism and egalitarianism, he has purged Asians from the civil service, confiscated their businesses, tried to force their daughters into unwanted marriages with Africans, and driven Asians from the islands. Many of those who have not already departed secretly, or been deported, are now leaving as fast as they can.

Nyerere's Albatross

As a result of these excesses, particularly against the Asians, Tanzania's international image has been badly tarnished. Nyerere himself has been subjected to harsh criticism for not using force, or at least the economic levers at his disposal—budgetary control of Zanzibar's civil service and security forces—to bring the Revolutionary Council into line. The forced marriage campaign was particularly embarrassing and caused an unprecedented public outcry on the mainland and



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abroad. Similar incidents have also brought protests from such international organizations as Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists, and have threatened to precipitate appeals to the UN.

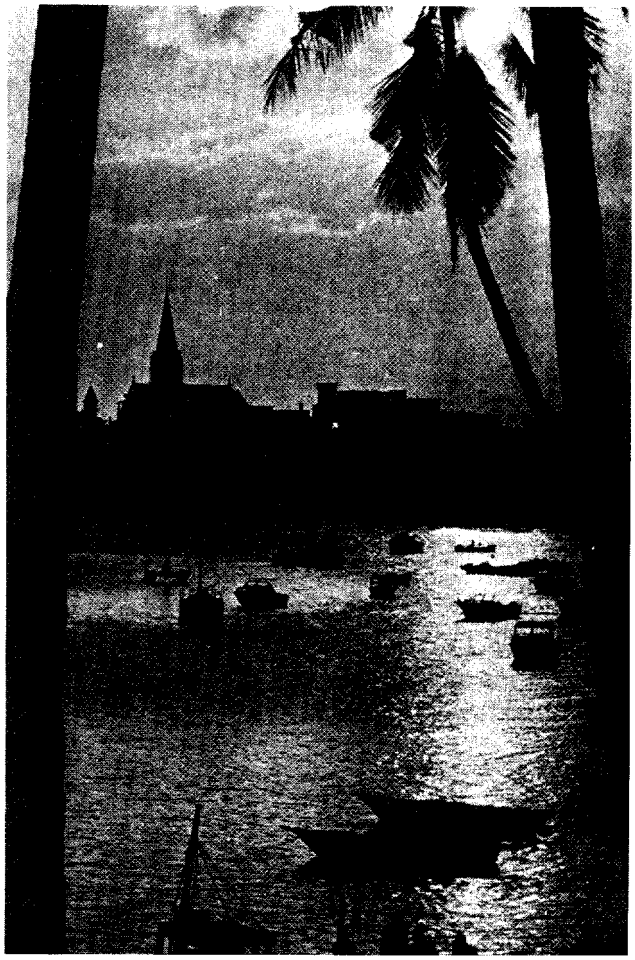
Rather than force a political showdown, Nyerere has tried to exercise a moderating influence over the volatile Karume. Even if Nyerere were inclined to use force—so far he has refused to do so—it is questionable whether he would have the power to enforce his will. In only a few instances, such as the forced marriage issue, has he been willing to exert heavy pressure on the Revolutionary Council. As a result, Nyerere has bartered away most of his authority over the islands in order to keep the fragile membrane of union intact.

Chinese Friends

Although Nyerere probably prevented a pro-Communist take-over on Zanzibar after the revolution, he has been far less able to prevent Chinese expansion there. Indeed, his own attitude toward China has changed from suspicion to friendliness and respect. Contributing to this shift have been: Nyerere's deepening commitment to African liberation from white minority rule in southern Africa; his disenchantment with Western aid; his fascination with China's efforts to modernize itself; and the Chinese willingness to provide Tanzania with economic and military assistance on generous terms.

As Nyerere has become more friendly, Peking has shifted its attention from Zanzibar to the mainland. Nevertheless, the Chinese have not neglected the islands and over the last few years they have consolidated their position as the island's principal aid donor, edging out their rivals, the East Germans and Soviets.

Nearly all of Peking's economic assistance to the island is being financed under a $14 million interest-free loan made in 1964, which has been used to build a power plant, a hospital, a sawmill,



Dar es Salaam

and a sports stadium, as well as some small factories. Some funds have also gone into two experimental state farms as well as well-drilling and water-storage projects. Since early 1970, when at Karume's request the Soviets withdrew their 15-man military advisory team, the Chinese have also taken over the training of Zanzibar's 3,300-man army. They now have 50 military advisers on the islands. In addition, they have about 250 advisers and technicians working on their economic projects and have established a virtual monopoly in medical services.

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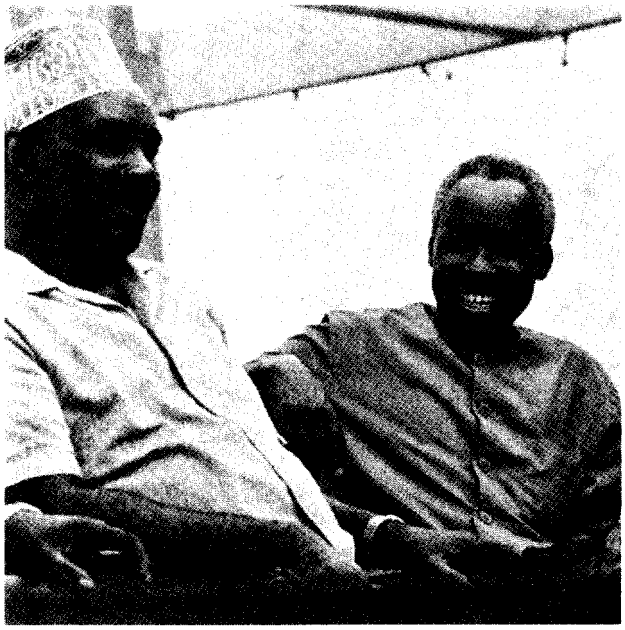

Karume and Nyerere:
What Lies Ahead?

The Chinese are not in a position to dictate policy, but their aid has given them the opportunity to influence at least some of the council's decisions. If they are not directly responsible, for example, for the departure of the Soviet advisers and the virtual collapse of the East German aid program, Karume at least found it easier to do without such aid knowing that the Chinese would be willing to fill the void. The Chinese have wisely stayed out of the constant bickering and backbiting that goes on within the Revolutionary Council itself, even though there is an identifiable pro-Chinese faction. Instead, the Chinese have won favor, especially with Karume, who is extremely sensitive to outside interference, by playing the role of a disinterested, altruistic benefactor.

Prospects for the Union

Since Nyerere put a stop to the forced marriages on Zanzibar over a year and a half ago, relations between the two partners have been punctuated by disputes. Chafing under Nyerere's interference, Karume publicly criticized some aspects of the President's socialist policies, a sacred cow on the mainland, and in a fit of pique last April he submitted the outline for a new constitution to the union cabinet that would have consolidated the two governments but gutted Nyerere's power. The President neatly sidestepped the challenge. After listening calmly to the proposals, he thanked Karume for his suggestions, adding that he would have to consult with other government and party leaders. Nothing has been heard of the matter since.

The two leaders continue to bicker over union financial matters. In spite of the islands' total economic dependence on cloves, the Zanzibar Government is in better financial shape than Dar es Salaam. Since 1968, the price of cloves has gone up substantially and the Zanzibaris have reaped a windfall. Over the last two years or so, the mainland's foreign exchange holdings have been heavily strained. Dar es Salaam approached Zanzibar last year about consolidating foreign exchange reserves, but Karume firmly refused. Although Nyerere and Karume finally reached a compromise last fall whereby the mainland could claim the islands' reserves for borrowing purposes, the matter has still not been resolved to the mainland's satisfaction.

The union has survived these and similar strains, but it is far from healthy. Few on the mainland would regret its demise, and even Nyerere's strongest critics would probably absolve him if he chose to wash his hands of this impossible situation. Nevertheless, the President is so personally committed to the union and to the idea of African unity that he is highly unlikely to precipitate a break except under the most extreme provocation. Over the long run, the President apparently hopes to develop from among those Zanzibaris now working in the mainland civil service a core of loyal, young, well-trained officials, who can one day replace the Revolutionary Council.

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The unpredictable and capricious Revolutionary Council could bust up the union at any time, but many of its members seem genuinely attached to it as long as the mainland stays out of Zanzibar's internal affairs. Despite his occasional blustering, Karume seems to enjoy a close relationship with Nyerere. He also enjoys the prestige of being vice president and the $2 million subsidy the mainland provides each year.

New difficulties would emerge if either Nyerere or the older but still robust Karume (65) left the scene. It is doubtful that any other mainland leader would show as much patience toward the Revolutionary Council as Nyerere has. Depending on the circumstances, Nyerere could probably work with Karume's successor. Until then, the union seems likely to muddle along as it has for the last eight years.

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